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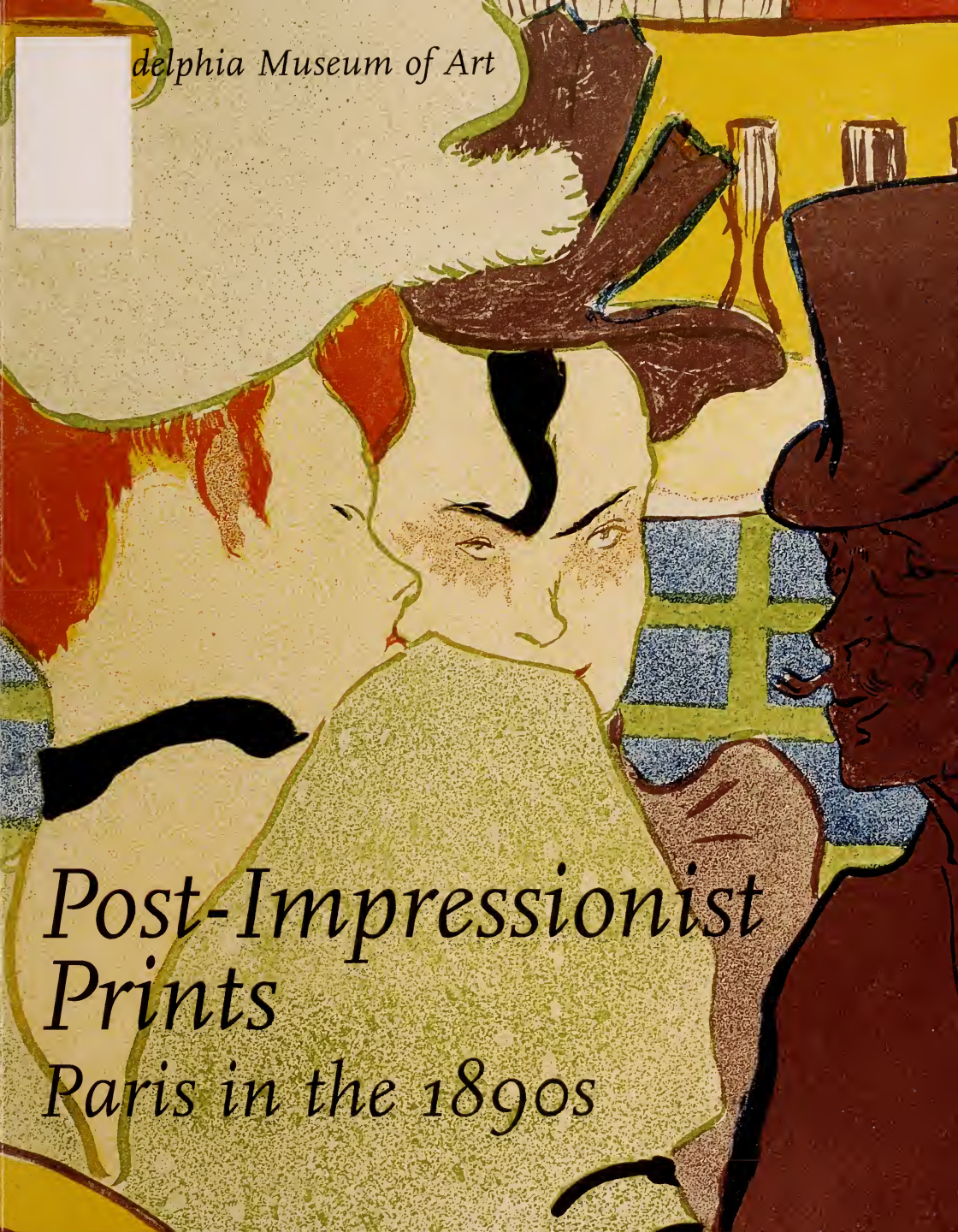

Post-Impressionist Prints

Paris in the 1890s

LIBRARY

Post-Impressionist Prints

This book is supported by a contribution from Arète Foundation, through the kindness of Betsy and Edward Cohen

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Post-Impressionist Prints

Paris in the 1890s

John Ittmann

PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART

Cover: Detail of *Flirt (An Englishman at the Moulin Rouge)*, 1892, by HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC. Purchased with the Lisa Norris Elkins Fund. 1951-96-52 (page 67)

Frontispiece: Detail of *Boulevard*, c. 1896, by PIERRE BONNARD. Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941-8-6 (page 54)

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MARY CASSATT (American, 1844–1926)
Tea, c. 1890
Drypoint, 7 ⅛ x 6 ⅛" (181 x 157 mm) plate
Purchased for the William S. Pilling Collection (by exchange). 1940–8–1

FOREWORD

A veritable cornucopia, the Philadelphia Museum of Art's collection of French color prints from the last decade of the nineteenth century springs from a succession of happy facts. The first local interest in these prints was sparked by two Pennsylvania painters moving in Parisian art circles of the 1890s: Mary Cassatt, who gained the attention of American collectors with the superb color etchings that had won the admiration of her French colleagues; and Henry McCarter, a friend of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, who encouraged his Philadelphia patrons to buy Lautrec's prints and posters. Then, as early as 1941, the Museum's first Curator of Prints and Drawings, Carl Zigrosser, demonstrated (only a few months after his appointment) a keen interest in the works of French printmakers with the spectacular purchase of 358 prints for only $4,600 (of which eighteen are illustrated here). And now, we delight in sharing Curator of Prints John Ittmann's informed connoisseurship and illuminating commentaries on the prints selected for this publication.

We are grateful to the generations of donors of works of art and acquisition funds to the Department of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs, who have given the Museum such a rich collection of this delectable fare. We hope their generosity and the exhibition "Paris in the 1890s: Painters' Prints in the Age of Bonnard, Vuillard, and Toulouse-Lautrec," which this publication accompanies, will, in turn, inspire new collectors and new contributors, as the art of printmaking enjoys another resurgence of creative invention.

Innis Howe Shoemaker
The Audrey and William H. Helfand Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs

Anne d'Harnoncourt
The George D. Widener Director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art

PAINTERS' PRINTS IN THE 1890s

Nobody pays attention here to anything but prints anymore,
it's the rage, the young don't make anything else.

CAMILLE PISSARRO to his son Lucien, April 13, 1897

AT THE END OF THE LAST CENTURY, PAINTERS IN PARIS took to making prints in greater numbers than ever before in the history of French art, creating an astonishing number of the images that most readily come to mind when we think of *fin-de-siècle* Paris, where the newest trends in art were still being introduced and tested. During a decade of dramatic changes of style and taste, printmaking played a leading part, touching on all the arts at times while accommodating to new technology and new markets. Many of the most imaginative artists participated in the full-blown renaissance of printmaking in Paris in the 1890s, undoing a centuries-old division between the arts in France that had cast the printmaker in a minor role.

In the mid-seventeenth century, when Louis XIV authorized the foundation of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Paris, he wished to raise the standards of French art by forming a school of native artists capable of competing with the Italian and Flemish painters and sculptors who then held sway throughout Europe. The Academy also offered instruction, and eventual membership, to professional engravers, who were allowed to display their prints alongside paintings at the Academy's regular exhibitions. In addition to producing imposing sets of prints to commemorate such lavish court festivities and ceremonies as royal weddings and funerals, these printmakers were also charged with making engraved reproductions of art treasures in the royal collections as well as paintings by modern French masters who were themselves trained at the Royal Academy.

Fig. 1
A.-J. DE FEHRT (French, 1723–1774)
View of an Engraver's Workshop, c. 1767
Engraving, 3 15/16 x 8 1/4" (101 x 208 mm) image
From *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers . . . par M. Diderot* (Paris, 1764), plate vol. 4, pl. 1
The Marian Angell Boyer and Francis Boyer Library of the Philadelphia Museum of Art

Such prints were intended for wide circulation, particularly among other European courts, as part of a general plan to elevate the international standing of French art while promoting the preeminence of the French court.

The printmakers at the Royal Academy were expressly forbidden by regulation to engage in painting, but there was nothing in the statutes to prevent a painter (or a sculptor) from making prints. Indeed, earlier in the century a number of French artists who studied in Rome had learned how to make their own etchings, a skill enjoyed by generations of Italian painters. What Italian and French painters had found so appealing about this particular technique was that it could be learned easily and executed quickly; an etching could be made with the same casual facility as a drawing and with as much suavity or brio as the draughtsman could muster. Engraving, on the other hand, was a neat and tidy process that took years to master; furthermore, it required weeks, if not months, to make a single print.

Membership in the Royal Academy conferred greater prestige on French painters than they had previously enjoyed within the confines of the traditional guild system, which tended to group artists

and artisans together by trade in various loosely related categories. In a society increasingly defined by outward signs of rank and privilege, the painters at the Royal Academy avoided any possibility of being associated with the craftlike profession of their confederates, the reproductive engravers, by giving up the practice of etching altogether.

This bias against printmaking on the part of painters persisted within the Royal Academy throughout the eighteenth century, even during a period when grand print collections were being assembled by connoisseurs who vied with one another for the finest etchings by admired artists such as Rembrandt. At a time when so many official painters at other European courts became enthusiastic etchers *à la Rembrandt*, in Paris, etching remained a hobby for *amateurs* only; with very few exceptions, French painters who made etchings did so during their student years at the Royal Academy's branch in Rome.

Academic engravers were equally conservative in outlook and stubbornly held on to the belief that the only suitable method for reproducing a work of art was the traditional black-and-white engraving executed over a preliminary etched outline. They stubbornly refused to take advantage of any of the newest printmaking techniques that energized the print trade in Paris after 1750, despite the fact that three of the most significant innovations were developed by three of their fellow academicians: a printmaker and two painters. Each of these new printmaking processes had been specifically devised to replicate the physical appearance of a particular drawing method and its materials: colored chalk, bistre ink and wash, and watercolor. The printmaker Gilles Demarteau (1722–1776) made *manière de crayon* (chalk-manner) engravings that were amazing imitations of colored-chalk drawings; one painter, Jean-Baptiste Le Prince (1734–1781), claimed credit for inventing aquatint as a way to make original prints in transparent washes of tone; and Philibert-Louis Debucourt (1755–1832) was so successful with the watercolor look of his multiple-plate color prints that he gave up painting entirely for printmaking (but not his higher academic rank as painter). During the same period a nonacademic printmaker, Jean-Charles François (1717–1769), concocted soft-ground etching as a shortcut for turning chalk drawings into prints, but he failed utterly in his attempt to interest the Academy's painters in using his new method to make

Fig. 2
Attributed to **VICTOR ADAM**
(French, 1801–1866)
View of the Lemercier Lithography Workshop in Paris, c. 1845–50
Lithograph, 16 11/16 x 13 1/4" (424 x 336 mm) image
Purchased with the Joseph E. Temple and Edgar Viguers Seeler Funds.
1948–76–2

their own "printed drawings." The tools and techniques of all of these processes would be adopted a century later by avant-garde painters when they made prints.

It would take a new invention, lithography, to start French painters making their own prints again. The chemical principles of lithography (literally, drawing on stone) were discovered in the late 1790s by a Bavarian playwright looking for a convenient method for printing his own scripts. Artists in Germany and England were quick to recognize the autographic utility of the new medium and produced several albums of lithographic drawings during the first years of the new century, but it was French painters of the caliber of Théodore Géricault (1791–1824) and Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863) who transformed a practical solution into a fine art. In the decades following the

Fig. 3
ADOLPHE MARTIAL POTEMONT
(French, 1828–1883)
Headquarters of the Society of Etchers, 1864
Etching, 9 7/8 x 14 1/4" (251 x 360 mm) image
Gift of Carl Zigrosser. 1974–179–263

establishment of the first two lithographic workshops in Paris in 1816, so many prominent painters were engaged by Paris publishers to draw on stone that the Romantic period in France is defined by lithography as much as by any other medium.

Lithography also had a commercial advantage over engraving and etching. The number of prints for an edition of an individual etching or an engraving on copper was limited by the inherent fragility of the soft metal, which could support only a limited number of impressions before the incised lines of the image started to wear out under the repeated pressure of the printing press. Where the sturdy burin lines of an engraved plate might hold up well enough to yield several hundred impressions, the more delicate passages on an etched or aquatinted plate began to deteriorate after only a few dozen pulls. On the other hand, an image drawn with a crayon on the polished, fine-grained surface of a lithographic stone could withstand a press run of thousands, thus allowing a publisher to tailor the size of an edition to the demands of the marketplace.

Lithography was the ideal medium for the popular, illustrated publications that flooded the market from the 1830s on, providing pictures by the tens of thousands for mass circulation in textbooks and fashion magazines, humorous albums and political newspapers. Honoré Daumier (1808–1879) made his first topical caricature around 1829, initiating a seemingly endless flow of lithographs that lampooned Parisians of every class and type. Under the constant pressure of deadlines, Daumier let loose with more than four thousand lithographs that were the mainstay of one daily newspaper for the next forty years. Such extraordinary facility won him his reputation as the outstanding draughtsman of the age, but his association with the casual subject and the throwaway print stood in the way of his real ambition, which was to be taken seriously as a painter. Ironically, within Daumier's own lifetime, the scenes of everyday life served up by his cartoons would become the commonplace themes of serious painting, as classical heroines and biblical sinners began to be replaced by farm girls and barkeeps.

By mid-century, lithography had become devalued as a suitable medium for most painters of any note, but it continued to thrive as a method for manufacturing popular reproductions of paintings (hand-colored and suitable for framing). A print of Lemercier's, the most up-to-date lithographic workshop in town, depicts a spacious, well-lighted atelier surrounded by tiers of shelves housing hundreds of hefty stones, a veritable library of lithographs at the ready for printing. On the balcony, artists can be seen drawing on stones, while down on the floor other workers staff worktables and presses, efficiently aligned in rows to facilitate the various stages of inking, printing, and coloring (fig. 2).

By the 1850s, as landscape painting continued to rise from the bottom of the academic hierarchy (history and allegory ranked highest), younger artists such as Charles-François Daubigny (1817–1878) were making landscape etchings as independent works of art to be exhibited at the Salon along with their paintings. A widespread etching revival in France had begun that would lead to the establishment in 1862 of the Society of Etchers (fig. 3). This society was handsomely housed in the offices of Cadart and Luquet, a new pub-

lishing and printing enterprise that promoted etching as the premier medium for artistic printmaking by issuing a series of collector's albums containing dozens of original prints by the society's members, including Édouard Manet (1832–1883), the hero of so many up-and-coming artists. The cachet that etching now acquired was not lost on professional printmakers; during the next decade, as photography hastened the demise of the highly finished burin engraving as the best means of reproducing works of art, etching stepped in as a fresher, more effective means to convey the looser brushwork of the new paintings.

Many full-time printmakers now aspired to careers as artists in their own right and were able to make a considerable reputation. Félix Bracquemond (1833–1914), a cofounder of the Society of Etchers and the first president of the Society of Painter-Printmakers in 1889, exhibited both reproductive and original etchings at the Impressionists' first exhibition in 1874. Bracquemond served as technical advisor to Mary Cassatt (1844–1926), Edgar Degas (1834–1917), and Camille Pissarro (1830–1903) at the end of decade, when they, too, suddenly got excited about making prints themselves. When Bracquemond showed an original multiple-plate color etching at the 1879 Impressionist exhibition, he must have prompted other artists to think about making prints in color: shortly after the close of the exhibition, Degas persuaded Pissarro to let him pull a small edition of proofs of one of Pissarro's new landscape plates, with each impression inked in a different color.

While etching continued to flourish in the 1860s and 1870s, lithography struggled to capture the attention of painters who made prints. In 1862, the year that the Society of Etchers was established on his premises, the publisher Cadart invited a few of its members to collaborate on a suite of lithographs. He provided five artists, including Bracquemond, Manet, and Henri Fantin-Latour (1836–1904), with three stones apiece, but only Fantin completed all three prints and the project had to be abandoned. When Camille Corot (1796–1875) and Pissarro made suites of lithographs a decade later, they both took advantage of coated transfer papers that made it possible for an artist to execute the drawing for a print away

Fig. 4
HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC (French, 1864–1901)
Cover for *L'Estampe originale* (Paris, 1893)
Color lithograph, 22 3/16 x 25 3/16" (564 x 640 mm) image
Gift of Carl Zigrosser. 1965–184–10

The cover for this album of limited-edition prints depicts entertainer Jane Avril in a lithographic workshop examining a proof fresh off the press.

from the lithographer's workshop, a decided attraction for the unseasoned printmaker.

Early transfer lithographs were essentially substitutes for drawings, but later, in the hands of more attentive artists such as Odilon Redon (1840–1916) and Pierre Bonnard (1867–1947), transfer paper was employed for strikingly original effects. In the 1880s Redon called attention to lithography with the deep, mysterious blacks he was able to obtain by using transfer paper for his prints. Bonnard placed transfer paper on top of fabric, allowing his drawing to pick up the woven texture that adds snap to many of his finished prints of the 1890s.

Redon, Degas, and Félix Vallotton (1865–1925) may have all made prints that gave new meaning to black and white, but it was color that finally lured painters back to the printing press in droves during the 1890s. In May of 1890 an enormous exhibition at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris of Japanese color woodcuts spurred many artists to tackle the complexities of color printing themselves. Bonnard's first color poster brightened Paris streets that very spring, kicking off a decade of poster-making by younger painters determined to leave their stamp on every kind of art and unafraid of commercial work. Throughout the decade enterprising publishers such as André Marty and Ambroise Vollard launched a succession of popular subscription sets of prints that guided the contemporary collector through the very latest art movements from Art Nouveau to Symbolism and back.

By the end of the century, however, a surfeit of deluxe color printing projects had clogged the market. In 1899 Vollard announced the publication of two of the most entrancing albums of color lithographs ever made, Bonnard's *Quelques aspects de la vie de Paris* (Some Aspects of Life in Paris; figs. 31–34) and Édouard Vuillard's *Paysages et Intérieurs* (Landscapes and Interiors; figs. 35–37, 39–40); although each album was limited to an edition of only one hundred copies, neither sold out until after the First World War.

JAPONISME

You could come and dine here with us and afterwards we could go to see the Japanese prints at the Beaux-Arts. Seriously, you must not miss that. . . . I dream of it and don't think of anything else but color on copper.

MARY CASSATT to Berthe Morisot, April 1890

WHEN JAPANESE WOODCUTS began to seep into European ports in the late 1850s, soon after Japan was opened up to foreign trade, they offered not only tantalizing glimpses of an exotic culture but also provided an introduction to a mode of picture-making that would change Western art forever. During the next decades these colorful prints were sought out and studied by the Impressionists, who were just then in the process of formulating a new style of painting. The informality of the themes treated by nineteenth-century Japanese print artists—life in the teeming capital, changing weather on a mountaintop—affirmed the Impressionists' choice of everyday life in Paris or the countryside as suitable subjects for their own investigations into the nature of the visible world.

The Japanese prints that first appeared in Europe were mostly recent works. Earlier Japanese woodcuts became more plentiful in Paris in the 1880s, but usually wound up in private collections and remained inaccessible to all but a few connoisseurs. It must have been a thrilling experience for Mary Cassatt and her colleagues to visit the huge exhibition of Japanese prints that opened at the École des Beaux-Arts on April 25, 1890 (725 Japanese woodblock prints, plus 421 illustrated books or print albums). Paris collectors supplied the loans for this public display, which for the first time offered an abundance of prints by the greatest Japanese masters of the eighteenth century.

Chief in importance among these early woodcut designers were Suzuki Harunobu and Kitagawa Utamaro,

Fig. 5
HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC (French, 1864–1901)
Mademoiselle Marcelle Lender, 1895
Color lithograph, 12 7/8 x 9 1/2" (327 x 242 mm) image
Gift of Lessing J. Rosenwald. 1952–13–18

Fig. 6
HOSODA EISHI (Japanese, 1756–1829)
Senzan of the Chōjiya, Representing Mountain Cherry Blossoms, 1796
Color woodcut, 15 5/16 x 10 1/2" (389 x 267 mm) sheet
The Samuel S. White, 3rd, and Vera White Collection. 1961–214–7

each of whom exerted an irresistible influence on countless artists then at work in Paris. Pierre Bonnard and Édouard Vuillard were clearly captivated by the tilted spaces and charming grace of the figures encountered in so many Japanese prints, particularly Harunobu's, which taught both artists a new way of looking. The insouciant elegance of Utamaro's geishas inspired the style and format of Cassatt's color prints (see fig. 12), but a more arresting subject in Utamaro's repertory attracted Eugène Grasset, one of the best of the Art Nouveau artists. Grasset based his frightening image *Morphinomaniac* (fig. 8) on a woodcut by Utamaro depicting a much-loved pair in Japanese folklore—Yamauba, a woman abandoned in the wilds (always identifiable by an unruly

Fig. 7
KITAGAWA UTAMARO I
(Japanese, 1753–1806)
Yamauba Cleaning Kintarō's Ear,
late 1790s
Color woodcut, 14 ¾ x 9 ¾" (375 x
247 mm) sheet
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Lessing J.
Rosenwald. 1959–93–27

Fig. 8
EUGÈNE GRASSET (Swiss,
1841–1917)
Morphinomaniac, 1897
Color lithograph, 16 ¼ x 12 ⅜" (414 x
313 mm) image
From *L'Album d'estampes originales de
la Galerie Vollard* (Paris, 1897)
Purchased with the SmithKline
Beckman (now Beecham) Fund for
the Ars Medica Collection.
1983–99–1

mane of dark hair), and her burly child, Kintarō (fig. 7).

No artist demonstrated a more thorough-going knowledge of the stylish quirks of early Japanese printmakers than Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, who raided their color woodcuts for many of his own wonderful effects (including his way of signing his prints with a monogram designed to look like publishers' circular stamps on Japanese woodcuts). Utamaro's geishas often have a light dusting of pink around the eyes to suggest inebriation (a sake flush), a ploy used by Lautrec in *Flirt* (fig. 44), as well as in his famous print of Mademoiselle Marcelle Lender

Fig. 9
TORII KIYONOBU II (Japanese, 1706–1763)
Two Actors: Ichikawa Danjūrō II in the role of Fuwa no Banzaemon and Segawa Kikujirō I in the role of Burei no Ikkaku, 1734
Hand-colored woodcut, 12 ¾ x 6" (325 x 153 mm) sheet
Gift of Mrs. Anne Archbold. 1946–66–5

Fig. 10
HENRI GUÉRARD (French, 1846–1897)
Fan, 1890s
Color monotype on silk, 11 ¼ x 22 ½" (287 x 571 mm) image
Purchased with the Lola Downin Peck Fund. 1977–226–1

(fig. 5). For this bust-length portrait of one of the most popular entertainers of Montmartre, Lautrec borrowed the large-head format developed especially by Utamaro and his followers to portray the notorious beauties of the Japanese capital's pleasure district (fig. 6).

The chronological arrangement of the 1890 exhibition must have drawn attention to those Japanese woodcuts made in the decades preceding the introduction of full-color prints by Harunobu in the mid–1760s. The simple coloring and primitive style of these early Japanese colored woodcuts seem to have struck a chord with French artists, always eager to renew art at any pristine source. The distinctive coloring of many of these very early woodcuts, in red-orange, yellow, and lacquer black (fig. 9), is the exact color combination used by Paul Gauguin (see figs. 20, 21) and Lautrec (see figs. 48, 52). As an added fillip, early Japanese prints were often sprinkled with golden sparkles for an effect that may have inspired Lautrec's use of *crachis*, the fine, mistlike spattering of pigments in many of his lithographs. Using *crachis* spatter and real leaves and fronds, Henri Guérard printed a fan design (fig. 10) that in its simplicity and sophistication is one of the most sympathetic responses to the art of Japan by any French artist working in Paris at the end of the century.

MARY CASSATT

While it's still fresh in my mind I just have to tell you about what I saw when I visited Miss Cassatt yesterday—the color prints she intends to show at Durand-Ruel's the same time as me. We open on Saturday, the same day as the patriots who, just between us, are going to be furious when they learn that right next to them there is an exhibition of exquisite rarities.

CAMILLE PISSARRO to his son Lucien, April 3, 1891

MARY CASSATT STARTED making prints not long after first meeting Edgar Degas in 1877, when he invited her to exhibit with the Independents, as the Impressionists then called themselves. She had ample opportunity to master the intricacies of printmaking in late 1879 and early 1880, when she, Degas, and Camille Pissarro were all caught up in an ambitious project—never realized—to start a periodical publication of original, limited-edition prints to be called *Le Jour et la nuit* (Day and Night). During this period of intensive activity, Cassatt experimented with a full range of intaglio processes, using etching, aquatint, soft-ground, and drypoint in various combinations; except for etching, none of these techniques was in general use by printmakers in Paris at the time.

By the end of the 1880s, however, Cassatt was using drypoint almost exclusively to make her prints. Drypoint was especially convenient for home use, since, as the name implies, it did not require the chemical bath needed for etching, soft-ground, or aquatint. Her choice of drypoint forced Cassatt to hone her drawing skills and to refine her graphic style, since the direct application of the sharp, pointed tool to scratch an image on a copperplate made corrections difficult. *Reflection* (fig. 11), one of a set of twelve drypoints executed between 1889 and 1890, was shown at the second annual exhibition held by the Society of Painter-Printmakers in January 1890 at the galleries of Durand-Ruel. Each print in the set presents a scene of quiet domesticity, the everyday subject matter for which Cassatt is best known: children, a seated woman, a mother or nursemaid holding an infant. Drawn from her

Fig. 11
MARY CASSATT (American, 1844–1926)
Reflection, c. 1890
Drypoint, 10 ¼ x 6 ¾" (260 x 170 mm) plate
Gift of Mrs. Horace Binney Hare. 1956–113–5

immediate circle, her sitters are posed simply, whether lost in thought or engaged in a mundane task, such as pulling on a baby's sock. Cassatt's incisive, controlled use of drypoint lines, leaving broad expanses of unworked areas in the background, gives these drypoints the pleasing appearance of unfinished sketches, an effect noted by contemporary critics.

In the fall of 1890 Cassatt began work on the suite of ten color prints that so impressed Pissarro when he first saw them on the eve of their adjoining exhibitions at Durand-Ruel's in April 1891. On view at Durand-Ruel's at the same time was the third annual exhibition of the painter-printmakers, the "patriots" who had recently voted to limit their society to artists born in France, automatically disqualifying both Cassatt and Pissarro from membership. Cassatt's introduction of these color prints at her own exhibition at Durand-Ruel's sparked a measure of hostility and misunderstanding in advanced art circles, just as Pissarro had predicted. Today, this set of prints is hailed as Cassatt's finest work in any medium and is recognized as a landmark in the history of printmaking.

As in her drypoints, Cassatt limited the subjects of her color prints to women seen in intimate or casual settings. *The Letter*, perhaps the best loved of all, shows how Cassatt adapted her more controlled drypoint draughtsmanship to the elements in style she found most appealing in Japanese color woodcuts, such as skewed perspectives, firm outlines, unusual patterns, and lively colors (fig. 12). Even the central motif in *The Letter*, the demure gesture of a white envelope brought to the lips to be

Fig. 12
MARY CASSATT
The Letter, 1890–91
Color drypoint and aquatint, 13 9/16 x 8 15/16" (345 x 227 mm) plate
The Louis E. Stern Collection. 1963–181–122

Fig. 13
MARY CASSATT
By the Pond, c. 1896
Color drypoint and aquatint, 13 x 16 7/8" (330 x 429 mm) plate
Gift of R. Sturgis Ingersoll, Frederic Ballard, Alexander Cassatt, Staunton B. Peck, and Mrs. William Potter Wear. 1946–11–7

sealed, finds its equivalent in Japanese prints showing a geisha biting her handkerchief flirtatiously. Cassatt's color prints combine drypoint with aquatint, in her own adaptation of a four-color printing process developed in Paris during the previous century. The standard eighteenth-century method required four separate plates, one for each of the three primary colors (red, yellow, and blue) plus black, but Cassatt preferred a softer palette and never used more than three plates for her prints. She worked up each of three plates to carry separate parts of the design as well as different colors, so that they formed a cohesive whole only when printed in succession on a single sheet.

The comparison of Cassatt's works with Renaissance paintings and sculpture of the Madonna and child is familiar and endearing. Perhaps nowhere is this equation more eloquently expressed than in *By the Pond*, Cassatt's largest color print, made around 1896 (fig. 13). Its close-up view suggests Italian Renaissance prototypes, as does the striking choice of colors. Indeed, this color scheme seems to have been directly inspired by the distinctive, bright, glazed colors—green, blue, yellow, and white—used by the Della Robbia family of Florence for ceramic relief sculptures of the Madonna and child that Cassatt would have come to know and love on her annual visits to Italy.

CAMILLE PISSARRO

I enclose a list of the prints I left on deposit at M. Hessèle's so you can find me . . . two proofs of each. If some proofs are lacking, you could . . . send me the plates, or print them—but you won't have enough time, better send them to me. . . . It seems my prints are being asked for; it's to send some to several cities in Germany that I need duplicates.

PISSARRO to his son Georges, February 6, 1898

SIX WEEKS SHY OF HIS SIXTY-eighth birthday, Camille Pissarro wrote excitedly to his son Georges that there finally seemed to be some real interest in his prints, on the part of a Dresden dealer who had a branch in Paris. Aside from a few sales, however, once again his hopes would be dashed. He had been an avid printmaker for the past thirty-five years; although the humble subject matter and the rough-and-ready manner of his little prints had caught the eye of other artists and the occasional critic, his prints never did attract many buyers. Nonetheless, he always found time to make prints and stayed on the lookout for new venues where they could be shown.

Pissarro made etchings with obvious relish, manipulating his materials with an inventiveness equaled by few others in his day. He used a variety of methods to roughen areas of his plates to print gradations of painterly tone, experimenting with various combinations of aquatint, soft-ground, and acid brushed directly on the plate. As a painter who delighted in rainy days as much as sunshine, Pissarro often aimed for a particular gray effect in his prints that he dubbed his *manière grise* (gray manner). He adapted a special tool for the purpose, a cone of rolled emery paper, which he applied firmly to the surface of the plate to roughen patches of the design so that they would print as soft gray tones with the look of brusquely wiped washes.

By 1894 Pissarro had his own press and was finally able to continue

Fig. 14
CAMILLE PISSARRO (French, 1830–1903)
The Marketplace at Gisors (Rue Cappeville), 1894–95
Etching, drypoint, and emery paper, 7 13/16 x 5 1/2" (198 x 142 mm) plate
Purchased with the Joseph E. Temple and Edgar Viguers Seeler Funds.
1948–76–243

his experiments in multiple-plate color printing begun earlier, not long after he had seen Cassatt's color prints. He was at work on three different color prints for most of a year, beginning with a favorite subject, the marketplace. Pissarro wanted the colors of the completed print to be muted. With this in mind, he worked the final plate all over with his emery-paper tool so that the other colors would be toned down when it was printed on top. Printed on its own in soft gray ink as a unique trial proof, *The Marketplace at Gisors* (fig. 14) stands as an independent essay in this artist's distinctive *manière grise*. Pissarro's annotation on another unique proof impression of a color print, *Farm Women Planting* (fig. 15), indicates that he omitted the final, black plate when printing it. Other impressions that were printed with all four plates show how Pissarro used the fourth plate only to add a few crisp lines to the contours of certain

Fig. 15
CAMILLE PISSARRO
Farm Women Planting, 1895
Color etching and aquatint, 4 ¼ x 6 ⅜" (120 x 162 mm) plate
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941–8–107

forms, so that its omission does little to rob this charming miniature of its sunny aspect.

Pissarro was fastidious about annotating each of his prints in pencil to give order to the welter of state proofs he was accumulating (like Degas, he worked some of his plates through more than a dozen states in pursuit of the final form of an image). He generally permitted only small editions of his etchings to be printed, work he often did himself after he acquired his own press. He worried that his images would be weakened by repeated printing and had some of his plates steel-faced to protect them. Steel-facing allowed large editions to be safely printed, but even so, Pissarro rarely permitted more than a dozen impressions to be pulled. Such caution was in keeping with Pissarro's earnest belief that prints such as these were meant for the delectation of only a few enlightened connoisseurs.

In the studio I have been feeling more down than ever . . . but I am still dreaming up projects; I plan to make a suite of lithographs, a first series on nude women at their toilette and a second one on nude dancers.

DEGAS to Evariste de Valernes, July 6, 1891

DEGAS PREFERRED THE process of making art over the finished product, so it is not surprising that his plans for a suite of bather lithographs never reached completion. In succession he executed six lithographs of bathers and eventually permitted three of them to be printed in editions of about twenty each, but only a handful of proofs exist for the other three. As for his projected suite of lithographs featuring nude dancers, he made only one attempt at this subject, a print that survives in only two impressions.

Throughout his career Degas was tirelessly absorbed in the depiction of the female figure, both dressed and undressed, using every conceivable medium: oil, pastel, sculpture, along with drawing, tracing, counterproof, monotype, and various methods of printmaking. By the 1890s he had narrowed his obsessive investigations of the human form to women in two guises: ballet dancers or nude bathers. While other artists still surrounded the nude with the trappings of classical myth and allegory, Degas's own works insist that an ordinary woman at her bath was the only natural way to show the female nude in modern art.

For the bather subjects, Degas was able to create in his studio the illusion of a woman's private quarters using various props—most typically a buttoned chaise longue, a curtained bed, and a bathtub. He could rearrange his set-ups as easily as he changed the poses of his models. His studies of nude dancers, however, were almost always divorced from any realistic setting, with no more than a few lines to summarize a bench or a chair.

Degas often repeated a subject over and over again, continually making new drawings of the same pose. Rather than starting again from scratch, he would take shortcuts to transfer an image to a new surface, using various means such as tracing, monotype, counterproof, and even

photography. In the case of the bather lithographs, he utilized all available transfer methods, including the specially coated papers manufactured for transfer lithography. Thus both *Nude Woman Standing, Drying Herself* and *After the Bath II* (figs. 16, 17) share the single pose that is seen in all six bather lithographs, a particular posture that Degas had first copied from Eugène Delacroix thirty years before.

Degas's compulsive experimentations make his lithographs particularly fascinating and unlike anybody else's. He reworked both *Nude Woman Standing, Drying Herself* and *After the Bath II* through several (sometimes baffling) stages of transformation before reaching the final state of each of the prints shown here. As in so much of his later work in oil and pastel, the imagery in these lithographs hovers between description and abstraction; both stones have been relentlessly redrawn, emphasizing the expressive form of the figure rather than anecdotal detail. During the course of reworking the first print in the bather series, *Nude Woman Standing, Drying Herself,* Degas applied a solvent directly on the stone to diminish or remove certain details, such as the back of the chaise longue and the rumpled clothing strewn upon it. He also eliminated almost every trace of a bed in the background, except for an angled pillow, which can still be glimpsed beyond the model's fall of hair.

Similarly, in the final state of *After the Bath II,* while we can still clearly see a portion of the buttoned chaise longue below, only the lower rail of the bed remains to hint at its presence. Through four successive stages, each recorded in progressive proofs, Degas redrew this lithograph. Each time the figure grew larger, so that the head and shoulder finally reached the top edge of the background. Just as he never bothered to conceal the strips he added to his sheets of paper whenever a drawing was about to spill over its borders, here, too, Degas extended the composition along the top with his crayon, making no effort to disguise the join.

This print presents a particularly dramatic example of Degas's unconventional approach to lithography, a planographic technique that capitalizes on the smooth, finely ground surface of a stone. For his litho-

Fig. 16
EDGAR DEGAS (French, 1834–1917)
Nude Woman Standing, Drying Herself, 1891–92
Lithograph, 8 ¼ x 5 ¾" (210 x 147 mm) image
Gift of Henry P. McIlhenny. 1942–19–8

Fig. 17
EDGAR DEGAS
After the Bath II, 1891–92
Lithograph, 13 1/8 x 9 7/16" (333 x 240 mm) image
Gift of Henry P. McIlhenny.
1942–19–7

graphs, Degas seems to have had no hesitation about employing etching and engraving tools to add texture and highlights to various parts of his compositions: a roulette, or toothed wheel, has left skittering trails of dots all over, while other highlights have been scratched and gouged so deeply with a sharp point that in places the surface of the paper is embossed.

VINCENT VAN GOGH

What most fires me—much, much more than any of the others in my line of work—is the modern portrait. I'm trying to do it with color and am certainly not the only one to try to do it this way. I should like—you see I'm far from saying that I am able to do all this, but ultimately this is where I'm headed—I should like to make portraits which a hundred years later will appear as apparitions to people living then.

VAN GOGH to his younger sister Wilhelmina, June 3, 1890

ON MAY 20, 1890, AFTER spending a year of voluntary confinement in an asylum in the south of France, Van Gogh moved to Auvers, a quiet little river town just north of Paris and well away from the disturbing excitement of the capital (where his brother Theo was living with his young family). Van Gogh was then subject to violent seizures, so it had been arranged for a doctor who had a country place in Auvers to keep an eye on him in return for a few pictures. Camille Pissarro, unable himself to take in the troubled artist, had recommended Doctor Gachet, a specialist in homeopathic medicine in Paris and well disposed to deal with Van Gogh's unpredictable behavior. Gachet was also a collector and an amateur artist who early on had made friends with many of the Impressionists, notably Cézanne, Guillaumin, and Pissarro, all three of whom had made etchings at Gachet's in Auvers in the early 1870s.

Unappreciated by contemporary collectors (he sold only one painting during his lifetime), Van Gogh became convinced that portraiture offered him a real opportunity to make a mark as an artist. Once settled in Auvers, he soon began work on the first of three portraits of Gachet, two oils and one etching (fig. 19). In the first portrait Van Gogh established the basic format, a classic melancholic pose, for those that followed. Van Gogh included in the painting sprigs of foxglove and two books by the Goncourt brothers to symbolize separate aspects of Gachet's identity: foxglove (digitalis) for his practice of homeopathy and

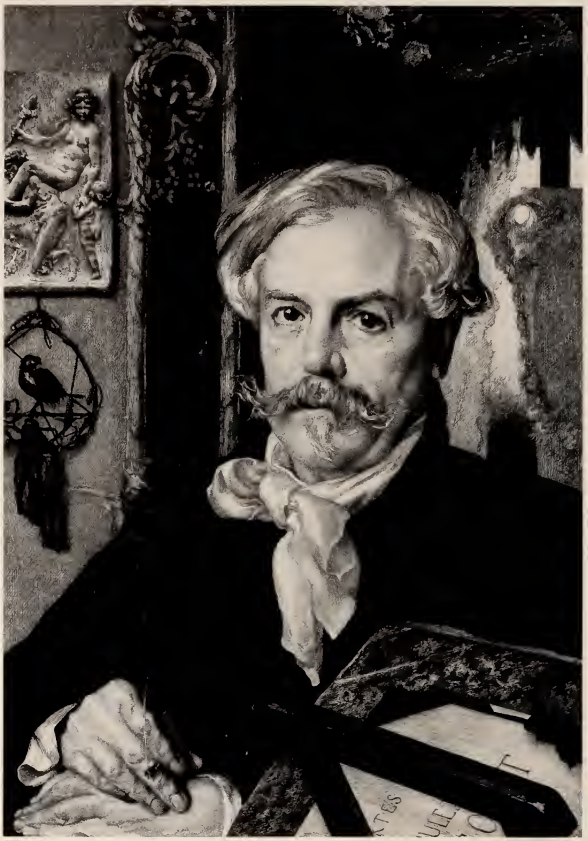


Fig. 18
FÉLIX BRACQUEMOND (French, 1833–1914)
Portrait of Edmond de Goncourt, 1881
Etching, 18 x 12 5/8" (457 x 321 mm)
image
The Minneapolis Institute of Arts

Fig. 19
VINCENT VAN GOGH (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Man with a Pipe (Portrait of Dr. Paul Gachet), 1890
Etching, 7 1/8 x 5 13/16" (182 x 148 mm)
plate
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941–8–139

modern novels for his up-to-date artistic interests.

Using specific objects in a portrait to indicate the special interests of a sitter was an old-fashioned touch that was perhaps inspired by an etching by Félix Bracquemond of one of the Goncourt brothers (fig. 18). In the print Edmond de Goncourt poses in front of works of art selected from his own collection to demonstrate the breadth of his knowledge and taste as a leading critic and connoisseur. Van Gogh singled out this very print for praise (calling it a "masterpiece") in a letter he wrote to his brother on the day he started painting Gachet's portrait, suggesting that he had this etching in mind from the beginning. In Van Gogh's own print (his only etching and the last of the Gachet portraits), he eliminated the allusive props that appear in the painting. Instead, he posed the doctor with his pipe, a more casual detail, perhaps also suggested by Bracquemond's etching, which shows Goncourt with a cigarette dangling in hand.

PAUL GAUGUIN

It is precisely because the woodcut goes back to the primitive era of printmaking that it is interesting, wood engraving for illustration having become more and more like photogravure: loathsome. . . . I am sure that in time my woodcuts, so different from everything else being made as prints, will be worth something.

GAUGUIN to Daniel de Monfreid, Tahiti, August 1901

ALONG WITH MANY OF HIS contemporaries, Paul Gauguin rediscovered the woodcuts produced during the late Middle Ages as inexpensive talismans for the devout. He considered primitive works of art of all kinds to be unsullied sources of inspiration, so he immediately responded to the rough cut and crude color of early woodcuts, the first prints of any kind made in Europe. Gauguin's own first prints had been a suite of zincographs printed on canary-yellow paper, published in 1889 at the time of the Paris World's Fair in an attempt to make his paintings better known. He also made his only etching in 1891, before leaving on his first trip to Tahiti: a portrait of the Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé (the same size as the etching of Doctor Gachet [fig. 19] that Van Gogh had sent Gauguin six months earlier).

Back in Paris in 1893, Gauguin turned to woodcut as the perfect medium for a new project requiring illustrations: He planned to issue a book called *Noa Noa* (Fragrance) as an account of his experiences among the South Sea Islanders, accompanied by a set of color woodcuts derived from paintings and other studies he had made in Tahiti. Part fact, part fiction, the text was conceived as a way of shedding light on the obscure subjects of his exotic pictures, especially after an exhibition of his paintings had caused a satisfying stir but failed to generate many sales. Several manuscript versions of *Noa Noa* exist, variously embellished with pertinent drawings, watercolors, and photographs, as well as fragments of the woodcuts, but the book was never published. Gauguin did manage, however, to finish a set of ten color woodcuts, which he arranged to have

Fig. 20
PAUL GAUGUIN (French, 1848–1903)
Te atua (God), 1893–94
Color woodcut, 8 1/16 x 13 15/16" (205 x 354 mm) block
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941–8–65

printed professionally when his own experimental printing methods made it difficult for him to produce a consistent edition.

An experienced woodcarver, Gauguin bent the traditional methods and materials of woodcut-making to his own purposes. He chose end-grain boxwood, the dense, hard material used by wood engravers (whose prints he so despised), and worked it with a chisel and gouge as if sculpting, a sharp point as if drawing, and sandpaper as if painting. With chisels he cut broad expanses of white and with gouges scooped out dark-edged furrows and ovals; with a sharp point he incised crisp lines to add definition to his figures; with sandpaper he abraded the remaining raised surfaces of the block to obtain blurred halftones.

Gauguin's unorthodox use of sandpaper for painterly effects in his woodcuts recalls Pissarro's method for producing soft grays in his etchings (see fig. 14) and Eugène Carrière's technique for creating sfumato effects in his monochrome lithographs (fig. 22).

Gauguin must have rehearsed the way he wanted his prints to look with the printer Louis Roy; an impression of *Te atua* (fig. 20) may be one of the trial proofs they made together. For it, the block was inked and printed twice (first in brown-black and then in black) over a muted-orange stencil. Gauguin himself double-printed many proofs of his woodcuts slightly off register for a special effect that added an atmospheric haze to his already strange-looking images. *Auti te pape* (fig. 21) is an example of the edition that Roy made by himself, printing colored stencils in yellow and red-orange, followed by the block itself, inked in black. The startling appearance of the impressions printed by Roy, with their slick, tangy colors and opaque blacks, lack the mysterious effects that Gauguin was able to obtain on his own, and it is hard to believe that the artist was entirely pleased with them.

In the summer of 1894, after completing the ten *Noa Noa* blocks, Gauguin undertook *Manao tupapau*, his grandest and largest woodcut (fig. 23). He counterproofed wet colors directly from the sheet on which he drew them onto a sheet of Japanese paper, then printed the woodblock in black ink on top. Before printing, he tore the sheet off at both sides, making it too small to accommodate the full width of the carved block. By carefully leaving both ends of the block uninked, Gauguin called attention to the ragged edges of the shortened sheet, giving this rare proof a fragmentary look, as if it were the still-potent relic of some forgotten age.

Broke, ailing, and otherwise out-of-sorts in Paris, Gauguin left France forever in 1895 and returned to Tahiti. Despite his continuing ill health and money problems, these were productive years when he created some of his greatest paintings, carvings, and prints. He not only printed editions of some three dozen new woodcuts, but also, around 1900, devised a new way to make drawings using a monotype process. The method was simple: first, he made a drawing in pencil on a sheet of paper and then placed the sheet—drawing side up—on top of another sheet that he had completely covered with ink. Then he used a pencil or crayon as a stylus to retrace

Fig. 21
PAUL GAUGUIN
Auti te pape (Fresh Water Is Flowing), 1893–94
Color woodcut, 8 x 13 15/16" (204 x 354 mm) sheet
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941–8–64

Fig. 22
EUGÈNE CARRIÈRE (French, 1849–1906)
Sleep, 1897
Lithograph, 13 5/16 x 16 7/8" (338 x 428 mm) image
From *L'Album d'estampes originales de la Galerie Vollard* (Paris, 1897)
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941–8–21

Fig. 23
PAUL GAUGUIN
Manao tupapau (The Spirit Watches Over Her), 1894
Color monotype and woodcut, 9 ½ x 18 7/16" (242 x 469 mm) sheet
Purchased with the Lisa Norris Elkins Fund. 1950–129–16

Fig. 24
PAUL GAUGUIN
Two Women of the Marquesas Islands, c. 1902
Monotype transfer drawing, 14 ⅝ x 12 ½" (372 x 318 mm) sheet
Purchased with the Alice Newton Osborn Fund. 1972–255–1

the lines of the drawing, applying pressure all the while, so that the back of the sheet would pick up wet ink off the ink-covered paper below. The traced transfer imprinted on the back of the paper was now the work of art. Gauguin left Tahiti for the Marquesas Islands in the fall of 1901, and there made a final group of traced monotypes, including *Two Women of the Marquesas Islands* (fig. 24), later shown at a memorial exhibition in Paris in November 1903, six months after his death. Gauguin had held tightly to his dream of a lost paradise and, to the end, remained enthralled by the beauty of native women, in each of whom he saw the face of Eve.

ODILON REDON

Black commands respect. Nothing prostitutes it. It is not pleasing to the eye and awakens no feelings. It is a spiritual agent much more than the most beautiful color of the palette or prism. . . . It is barely esteemed in France, except when degraded by color with a quite different result, one that destroys a print and marginalizes its image.

REDON quoted in *Odilon Redon* (Paris, 1913) by André Mellerio

IN PARIS IN THE 1870s, WHILE artists in Impressionist circles concentrated on recording aspects of daily life and changing weather in paintings bathed in light and color, Odilon Redon stood apart. Believing that an artist should draw inspiration from deep within rather than from the real world around him, Redon gave substance to waking dreams in countless black-and-white drawings, using sooty black charcoal to intensify his dark visions.

In a struggle to win attention for the startling fantasies he called his *noirs* (blacks), Redon seized upon lithography as a way to replicate them for wider distribution. He took advantage of lithographic transfer paper, which allowed him to make the drawings for his prints in his own studio, without having to work directly on the stone. Mining an accumulated inventory of charcoals for his imagery, in 1879 at the age of thirty-nine, Redon began to issue lithographic albums and single prints. Redon cannily promoted his work by presenting inscribed copies of the albums to influential critics and writers, whose favorable comments attracted buyers for the drawings. Although Redon was sought out by Symbolist writers to make suites of lithographs captioned with excerpts from their texts, he also conjured up his own allusive subtitles for the baffling images contained in many of his albums, such as *Songes* (Dreams) published in 1891 (figs. 25, 26).

Redon pushed lithography to a new level with the rich, luminous blacks he achieved in his prints, sumptuous equivalents for the velvety surfaces of his charcoals. At the time that Redon started making

ODILON REDON

Fig. 25
ODILON REDON (French, 1840–1916)
And down there the astral idol, the apotheosis, 1891
Lithograph, 10 7/8 x 7 1/16" (277 x 179 mm) image
From *Songes* (Paris, 1891)
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941–8–160

Fig. 26
ODILON REDON
Day, 1891
Lithograph, 8 1/4 x 6 1/8" (210 x 155 mm) image
From *Songes* (Paris, 1891)
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941–8–164

lithographs in 1879, the process was used primarily for inexpensive popular prints and was ignored as a method for creative printmaking by all but a few serious painters (most particularly Henri Fantin-Latour, who had recommended it to Redon in the first place). More than any other artist's works, Redon's black-and-white prints demonstrated the expressive potential of lithography to a younger generation of artists for whom it became the favorite medium for making prints, especially in color.

PAUL SIGNAC

I beg you to fix a guaranteed completion date right now for the Vollard and Pellet plates. I'll be paying on the 15th and I need to be able to retouch my stones. You know that I'm both serious and punctual and if I have to go off without having seen those proofs I shall be very annoyed. I've waited my turn long enough. So I ask you this instant to set a date when the Vollard proof will be ready and to do immediately what you have to do to have the Pellet plate transferred to stone and to pull the proofs . . . .

SIGNAC to Auguste Clot, March 1898

THE LATE 1890s WAS THE peak of the boom in color lithography. Not only was Paul Signac juggling separate print commissions for rival publishers, Ambroise Vollard and Gustave Pellet, but he had to wait his turn at the print workshop of Auguste Clot. A longtime employee with Lemercier's lithography firm (see fig. 2), Clot had branched out on his own by 1896, rapidly becoming one of the most sought-after color printers in Paris. A specialist like Clot relieved the artist of the most complex and tedious procedures of color printmaking.

Since it usually fell to the printer to separate the colors for transfer onto different stones and to coordinate their alignment, many painters had little to do with the actual production of a color print, although they were often quick to berate the printer for any slip-ups. Signac had had a disastrous experience with his first color lithograph in 1894, and afterward kept a close eye on his editions; he sent back trial proofs covered with corrections for the printer and touched up the stones himself when he felt it necessary. Signac's systematic method of painting in dots of pure pigment was particularly well suited to collaborative printmaking, since his precise division of pigments allowed easy sorting into color groups by the printer for the requisite number of lithographic stones. Just as

Fig. 27
PAUL SIGNAC (French, 1863–1935)
Washerwomen by the River Seine at Les Andelys, c. 1897
Color lithograph, 11 7/8 x 18" (302 x 457 mm) image
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941-8-124

Signac executed his paintings on a white ground to add luminosity to his color, he found in printmaking that the white of the paper produced a similar effect with translucent printer's inks (see fig. 27).

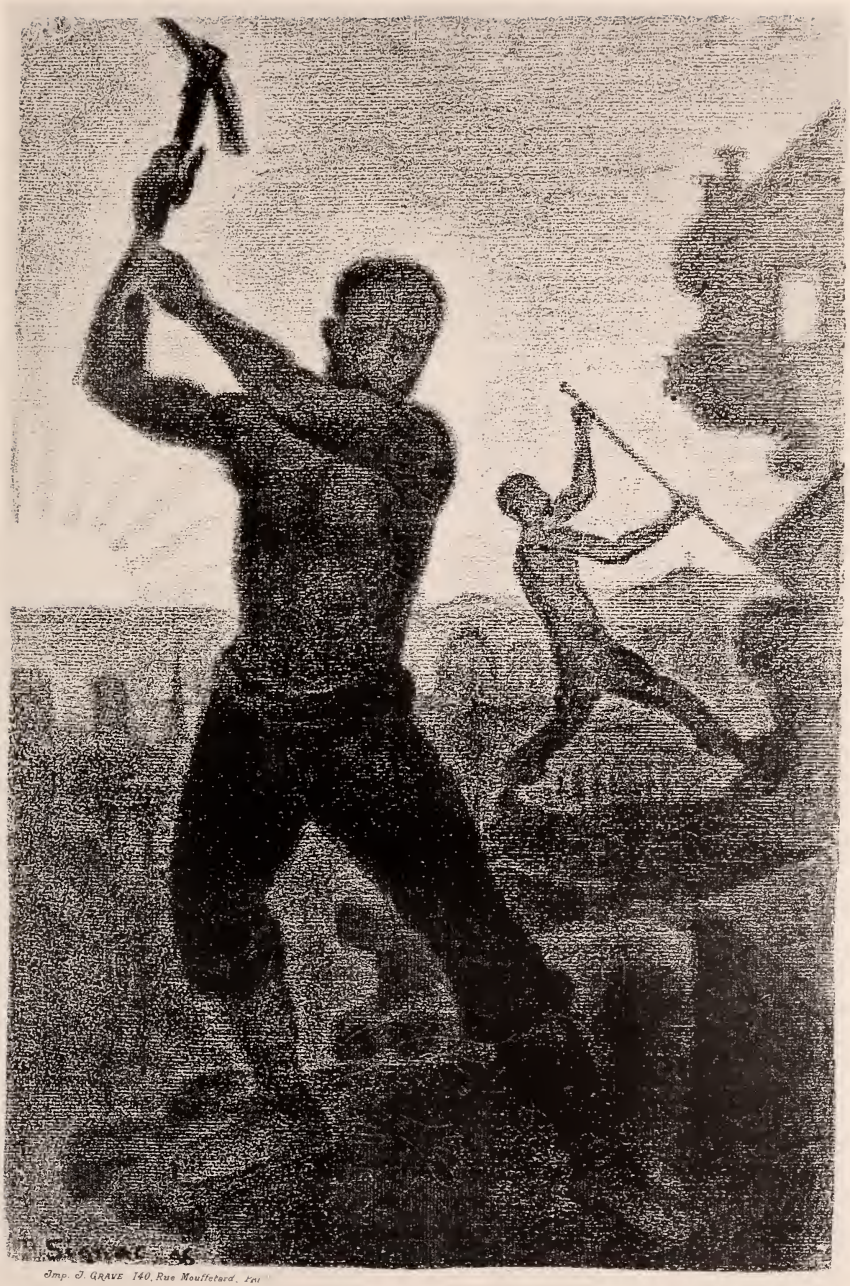
Signac was a member of a group of mostly younger artists ("Papa" Pissarro was a member for a time) who were intent on replacing the Impressionist painters' spontaneous brushwork and depictions of changeable weather with formal stability and deliberate application. Neo-Impressionism, as the movement came to be called, made its public debut at the last Impressionist exhibition in 1886, where Georges Seurat (1859–1891) unveiled its manifesto, *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of the Grand Jatte*. Seurat remained their leader until his untimely death, but from the outset Signac assumed the role of spokesman for the group, articulating their ideas in his writings while practicing them in art. *Application of Mr. Charles Henry's Chromatic Circle* (fig. 28) was a cheaply produced commercial lithograph that Signac made as an advertisement for the back of the season's program of a recently founded avant-garde theater. In agreeing to promote a book on color theory, Signac declared his allegiance to the ideas of the author Charles Henry (1859–1926), a mathematician-physiologist-psychologist. Henry believed that he had invented a measurable system of aesthetics that could be applied to sight, sound, and smell, as well as to language and

Fig. 28
PAUL SIGNAC
Application of Mr. Charles Henry's Chromatic Circle, 1888
Color lithograph, 6 1/16 x 7 1/16" (154 x 180 mm) image
Purchased with the Joseph S. Temple and Edgar Viguers Seeler Funds. 1948–76–268
Printed on the back of a theater program published by the Théâtre Libre for the 1888–89 season.

Fig. 29
PAUL SIGNAC
The Wreckers, 1896
Lithograph, 18 7/16 x 11 15/16" (468 x 304 mm) image
Purchased with the Print Revolving Fund. 1943–62–10

emotions, in order to achieve a harmonious balance; his notion that harmony in art would foster social harmony became a central tenet of the philosophy of the Neo-Impressionists.

Many Neo-Impressionists wholeheartedly espoused militant anarchism as the only viable means to reform society. In 1895 they rallied around a leading anarchist journal, *Le Temps nouveaux* (The New Times), which had been suppressed the year before during a widespread government purge (Pissarro fled the country to avoid being sent to prison). To help the cause, sympathetic artists were called upon to contribute large-sized prints that would be offered for sale at one franc apiece. Among the first to comply was Signac, with the transfer lithograph *The Wreckers* (fig. 29), an emotionally charged image that typifies the gritty subject matter of prints by other artists in the series.



Imp. J. GRAVE 140, Rue Moufletard, Par

PIERRE BONNARD

I've learned a lot as a painter by making color lithographs. When you have to study the relationships between tones while playing with only four or five colors that you overlay or abut, you discover a lot of things.

BONNARD quoted in *Les Nabis* (Paris, 1990) by Claire Frèches-Thory and Antoine Terrasse

BONNARD FIRST BEGAN TO make a name for himself with the public as a printmaker in Paris in the early 1890s, before securing his reputation as a painter by the end of the decade. He debuted at the age of twenty-three in 1891 with an eye-catching poster that set the town abuzz as soon as it appeared in the streets. Making prints proved a handy way to make money, allowing Bonnard to quit law school and become a full-time artist; during the next decade he found steady work as a designer of posters, book covers, song sheets, music primers, and theater programs, as well as more than one hundred lithographs as illustrations to a poem by Stéphane Mallarmé. Being a graphic artist also gave him the opportunity to put into practice a belief he shared with other young artists that art should be part of daily life and that the commonplace could be made artistic.

Bonnard was the wittiest member of the band of young artists who called themselves the Nabis (prophets). Taking their lead from Gauguin, the Nabis were eager to push beyond the Impressionist painters' naturalistic vision and atmospheric brushwork. They were inspired by Japanese color woodcuts and traditional French folk prints to use flat colors and decorative contours to carry meaning and to convey feeling. In the *Little Laundry Girl* (fig. 30), Bonnard showed off his mastery of this new style of picture-making, letting the crooked black silhouette and the angle of the cobbled street convey the solitude and fatigue of the little worker as effectively as her chance encounter with a neighborhood stray that is its subject.

Bonnard had enormous affection for children and dogs, and usually preferred to show their playful side. *Street Corner* is from an album of color lithographs by Bonnard that was published by the dealer Ambroise Vollard in 1899 (fig. 31). These delightful glimpses of life in 1890s

Fig. 30
PIERRE BONNARD (French, 1867–1947)
Little Laundry Girl, 1895–96
Color lithograph, 11 9/16 x 7 3/4" (294 x 197 mm) image
From *L'Album des peintres-graveurs* (Paris, 1896)
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941–8–14

Bonnard
96

Fig. 31
PIERRE BONNARD
Street Corner, c. 1897
Color lithograph, 10 11/16 x 13 1/8" (271 x 333 mm) image
From *Quelques aspects de la vie de Paris* (Paris, 1899)
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941–8–3

Fig. 32
PIERRE BONNARD
Boulevard, c. 1896
Color lithograph, 6 7/8 x 17 1/16" (175 x 433 mm) image
From *Quelques aspects de la vie de Paris* (Paris, 1899)
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941–8–6

Fig. 33
PIERRE BONNARD
Title Page, c. 1898
Color lithograph, 15 5/8 x 13 1/4" (397 x 336 mm) image
From *Quelques aspects de la vie de Paris* (Paris, 1899)
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941–8–1

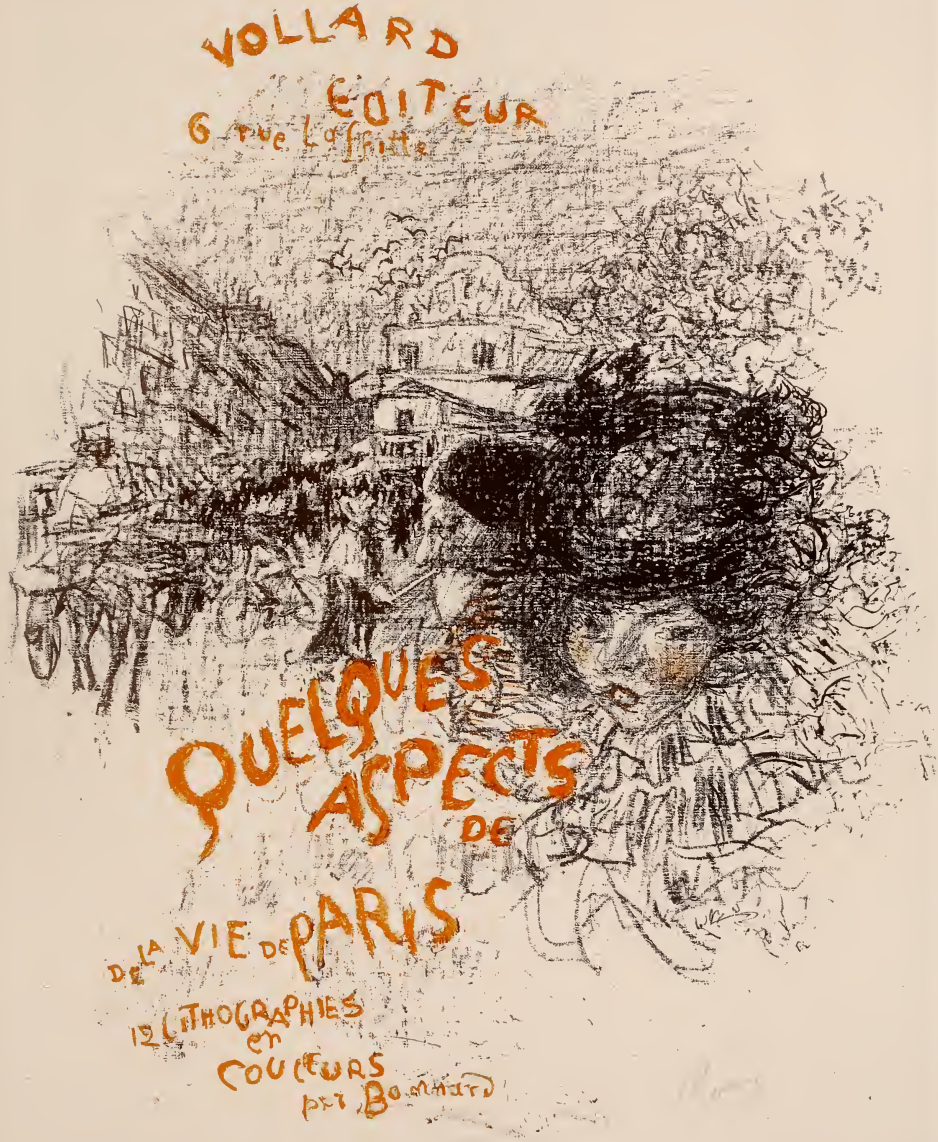

VOLLARD
EDITEUR
6 rue Laffitte
QUELQUES ASPECTS DE LA VIE DE PARIS
12 LITHOGRAPHIES EN COULEURS
par Bonnard

Fig. 34
PIERRE BONNARD
House in a Courtyard, c. 1895–96
Color lithograph, 13 9/16 x 10 3/16" (345 x 260 mm) image
From *Quelques aspects de la vie de Paris* (Paris, 1899)
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941–8–4

Paris vividly express the youthful exuberance of the artist while assuring him a place high on any list of great printmakers. As in Whistler's suites of etchings of London and Venice, Bonnard in his series rarely focused on any of the grander sights in town. Most of them show people in the streets going about their business, unaware that the artist is watching (see fig. 32). The pretty Parisienne seen close up on the album's title page seems to have been caught by accident, as if by camera instead of crayon, as she intrudes on Bonnard's line of vision while making her way across a busy square (fig. 33).

House in a Courtyard (fig. 34) is one of two lithographs in the album with an indoor setting (the other shows a theater audience). This has always been considered the most evocative of all the prints in the set, perhaps because the open window, rendered in melancholy, muted grays, has the ability to awaken in us a sense of yearning. We feel the artist's presence here, and imagine him in his attic studio: distracted by a sudden movement outside, he looks up and finds poetry in the rhythms of the familiar parade of windows and terracotta chimney pots across the way.

ÉDOUARD VUILLARD

And another thing, in the midst of these objects, I was astonished to see Maman come in wearing a blue robe with white stripes. Ultimately, none of these inanimate objects bore any ornamental relation to another, the ensemble was as disparate as could possibly be. Yet this occurred in an atmosphere that was alive and from it emerged a particular feeling that I didn't find at all unpleasant. Maman coming in there was a surprise, a live person. For a painter, the differences of shapes, of form are all it takes to be of interest.

VUILLARD'S Journal, October 26, 1894

VUILLARD'S MODEST BEHAVIOR in public belied the grand ambition of the many decorative projects he undertook for prosperous clients throughout the 1890s and gave little indication of his gift for friendship. He was especially close to Misia Natanson (see fig. 49), whose vivid personality and daring taste attracted to her Paris apartment and house in the country the brightest that Paris had to offer. Her well-heeled husband and his brothers owned *La Revue blanche*, the smartest magazine in town, which provided a forum for the latest ideas in art and poetry, and published prints by many of the Nabis, including several of Vuillard's lithographs beginning in 1893.

More than any other artist of the brotherhood of the Nabis, Vuillard resisted their call for a return to the classical and religious themes of past art to elevate the tone of modern painting. While his style may have reflected other precepts of the Nabis, for his subject matter Vuillard held fast to one of the central tenets of Impressionism, and he painted life as he found it. His own circle of family and friends, and the rooms that they inhabited, would provide him with a sufficient repertory of motifs. Vuillard demonstrated both the novelty of his vision as an artist and his invention as a printmaker in *Paysages et Intérieurs* (Landscapes and Interiors), an enchanting album of thirteen color

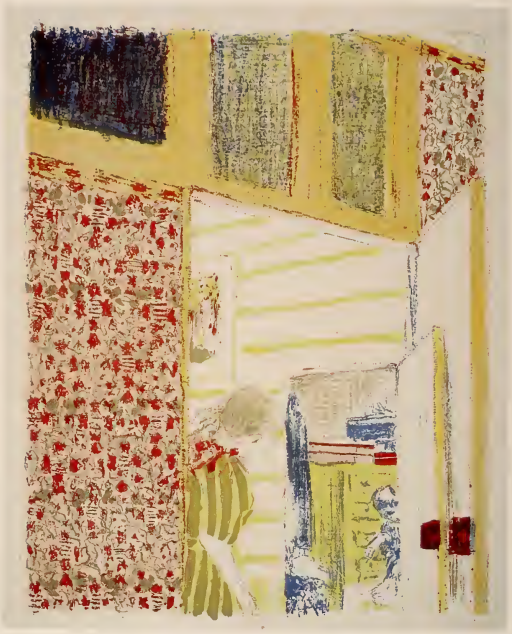


Fig. 35
ÉDOUARD VUILLARD (French, 1868–1940)
Pink Interior with an Open Door, 1899
Color lithograph, 13 3/8 x 10 1/4" (340 x 275 mm) image
From *Paysages et Intérieurs* (Paris, 1899)
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941–8–153

Fig. 38
SUZUKI HARUNOBU (Japanese, 1724–1770)
A Young Man Visiting a Hat Maker, c. 1767–70
Color woodcut, 10 13/16 x 8 3/16" (276 x 208 mm) sheet
The Samuel S. White, 3rd, and Vera White Collection. 1967–30–143

Fig. 36
ÉDOUARD VUILLARD
Pink Interior with a Hanging Lamp at Right, 1899
Color lithograph, 13 ¾ x 11" (350 x 279 mm) image
From *Paysages et Intérieurs* (Paris, 1899)
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941–8–152

Fig. 37
ÉDOUARD VUILLARD
Pink Interior with a Hanging Lamp at Left, 1899
Color lithograph, 13 ⅝ x 10 13/16" (347 x 275 mm) image
From *Paysages et Intérieurs* (Paris, 1899)
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941–8–151

Fig. 39
ÉDOUARD VUILLARD
The Cook, 1899
Color lithograph, 13 ¾ x 10 ¼" (350 x 272 mm) image
From *Paysages et Intérieurs* (Paris, 1899)
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941–8–157

Fig. 40
ÉDOUARD VUILLARD
The Avenue, 1899
Color lithograph, 12 ⅛ x 16 ³⁄₁₆" (308 x 413 mm) image
From *Paysages et Intérieurs* (Paris, 1899)
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941–8–148

lithographs created on an intimate scale ideally suited to his subject.

Most of the thirteen prints in the album are interiors: seven offer vignettes of the family flat he shared with his mother (where she conducted her corset-making trade); two are of the grander apartment of his patroness, confidante, and muse, Misia Natanson; and only four of the views take place out-of-doors (fig. 40). Vuillard's introspective interiors are magical constructions of decorative pattern and ornamental outline; without bias he incorporated anything and anybody that lay within his view. One of the coziest subjects in the set is a print of his mother, sitting in her kitchen wiping dinner plates (the double sink is still full of dishwater); the pattern of her blouse is echoed in the tiles on the countertop, while the rotundity of her petite figure is affectionately repeated in a stack of pots and pans (fig. 39).

At the heart of the album are three delicious prints depicting the sitting room of the Vuillard flat as a confection of pink-patterned wallpaper and glowing yellow lamplight, of complicated spaces and intriguing shapes (figs. 35–37). In these three prints Vuillard was more interested in portraying the ambience of a room rather than the likenesses of any of the four people shown there (Maman is just coming in a door at the back). Vuillard followed the format of Japanese woodcut triptychs, conceiving each of the three prints as a self-sufficient composition, yet forming a single, sweeping view when lined up in a row. Although he never adopted the skewed spatial conventions of Japanese artists (see fig. 38), the visual pleasure that Vuillard derived from these distortions inspired him to adopt unusual viewpoints in his own prints while always adhering to the principles of Western perspective. The unconventional sight line of the three *Pink Interiors* is one of the most daring of his visual conceits; Vuillard must have sketched all three views looking up from an easy chair, prompting him to crop them at his own eye level.

FÉLIX VALLOTTON

My woodcuts appear to be making their small way in the world, and are making me well known. True, it doesn't earn much; the dealers refuse to give me a receipt and I am at their mercy.

VALLOTTON to his brother Paul, June 1892

AS A PRECOCIOUS TEENAGER Swiss-born Félix Vallotton arrived in Paris in 1882 determined to become an artist, but ten years later still found it difficult to make ends meet, despite the modest success he had managed to achieve as a regular exhibitor at the annual Salons. To improve the sorry state of his finances, in 1891, at the age of twenty-six, he took a job as a picture restorer and, as a sideline, started writing art reviews for his hometown newspaper, the *Gazette de Lausanne*. By the end of that year, however, Vallotton had hit upon a more satisfying way to eke out a living—making woodcuts—and within six months he was well on his way to acquiring a name as one of the foremost modern masters of this little-used medium, with a reputation that would continue to overshadow his career as a painter.

Though he never officially joined the brotherhood of the Nabis until much later, in the 1890s Vallotton kept constant company with them (becoming one of Vuillard's lifelong friends). He was also a welcome member of the artistic coterie that gathered around *La Revue blanche* and a particular favorite of Misia Natanson and her husband, the magazine's editor-in-chief. From the Nabis, Vallotton learned that flat, colored shapes and decorative outlines had the power to enrich the meaning of a work of art, but submitted their lesson to the stricter, black-and-white discipline of the knife-cut woodblock print.

With incisive clarity, Vallotton reclaimed for the woodcut an age-old role—recently usurped by lithography—as the most effective medium for inexpensive popular prints and political broadsides. In the manner of folk images, many of Vallotton's wry subjects carry their titles tucked into the corner of the composition, like the motto of a moralizing fable. Thus his woodcut of middle-aged, middle-class men, throwing themselves with wild abandon into an anthem, is soberly

Fig. 41
FÉLIX VALLOTTON (Swiss, 1865–1925)
The Patriotic Refrain, 1893
Woodcut, 6 7/8 x 10 11/16" (174 x 272 mm) block
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941–8–138

titled *The Patriotic Refrain* (fig. 41). In his prints Vallotton combined a journalist's eye for telling detail with a caricaturist's gift for exaggeration, as here, where the sweeping arc of the balcony railing seems barely able to hold back the crush of unruly singers. As was the case for many artists in the 1890s, Vallotton frequently encountered his subjects while walking around the city. He was especially drawn to crowds and was fascinated by their unpredictable behavior. The rowdy little angels (fig. 42) that swarm around a policeman (and the deadbeat he has collared) are scarcely different from their patriotic elders.

Taking his cue from Degas and Pissarro, in a dozen woodcuts of female nudes, Vallotton employed both the bathtub and the riverbank as settings where women could be found undressing. He omitted both of these devices in his last print of a nude and instead used his own studio couch as the backdrop for his model. Divested of these fictional settings, *Laziness* (fig. 43) is a boldly executed emblem of sensuality as well as the artist's most famous woodcut. In a bravura display of black and white, Vallotton presents the stark white bodies of a cat and its caresser against a dark ground animated with undulating patterns, creating an atmosphere of restless tension in apparent contradiction to the languor suggested by his title.

Fig. 42
FÉLIX VALLOTTON
Little Angels, 1894
Woodcut, 5 7/8 x 9 13/16" (150 x 250 mm) block
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941–8–137

Fig. 43
FÉLIX VALLOTTON
Laziness, 1896
Woodcut, 7 x 8 13/16" (179 x 224 mm) block
Purchased with the John D. McIlhenny Fund. 1941–8–136

You will be receiving a package containing three prints (color lithographs) by me. I don't know whether I'll be able to get to Brussels for the opening of the exhibition. So I ask you please to have tabs glued on the three prints (on the top corners only) and have them placed under glass as best possible. . . . One (the largest) serves as a commentary for a publication on which all the Young Artists are collaborating.

LAUTREC to Octave Maus, January 27, 1893

HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC may be said to have come of age as a painter in Brussels in 1888 at one of the exhibitions held there annually by an avant-garde group of Belgian artists who called themselves Les XX (The 20). At their 1892 exhibition he had proudly shown off his first color lithograph, a wildly successful poster (fig. 50), and now in 1893, four posters and one year later, Lautrec made arrangements to have his three newest prints displayed alongside his paintings (a practice he would continue). Whereas his large posters had rotary-press runs of more than a thousand, these three prints constituted his first attempt at making smaller, limited editions aimed at a more discriminating collector (usually no more than a hundred hand-printed impressions of each).

Perhaps the first of these limited-edition color lithographs, *Flirt (An Englishman at the Moulin Rouge)* reveals Lautrec already in full command of the medium in which he would make his mark (fig. 44). He was a draughtsman of great panache, with a flowing line and breadth of vision as much at home in wall-sized paintings and posters as in the reduced format of magazine illustrations and limited-edition prints. *L'Estampe originale* (The Original Print) was designed by Lautrec as the wraparound cover (fig. 4) for a collector's album that rounded up new talent and gave artists a chance to try their hand at printmaking. The cover depicts Jane Avril (see fig. 52), one of the entertainers Lautrec would help to make famous with his posters. She is shown in a lithographic

Fig. 44
HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC (French, 1864–1901)
Flirt (An Englishman at the Moulin Rouge), 1892
Color lithograph, 18 9/16 x 14 3/8" (472 x 372 mm) image
Purchased with the Lisa Norris Elkins Fund. 1951–96–52

w Ancourt à Paris

Fig. 45
HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC
Title Page, 1896
Color lithograph, 20 5/8 x 15 7/8" (524 x 403 mm) sheet
From *Elles* (Paris, 1896)
Purchased with the Lisa Norris Elkins Fund. 1950–129–2

workshop examining an impression fresh off the hand-press, thus forming a fitting introduction intended by Lautrec for this "publication on which all the Young Artists [were] collaborating."

Lautrec created his own suite of color lithographs in 1896, *Elles* (Those Women), the most striking of all the print albums published during the 1890s. In ten prints, the album shows the inmates of a fancy brothel going about their daily routine. The title page sets the stage for the entire series: here a redhead (Lautrec's favorite shade) is putting up her hair in front of a client whose presence is indicated by his top hat resting on her frilly drawers (fig. 45). The other prints show prostitutes in various stages of preparation for work: waking, getting up (fig. 46), having breakfast, filling a bath, washing, combing, primping, and even entertaining a client (fig. 47).

It has been variously suggested that the entire album is a record of the intimate friendship of a particular

Fig. 46
HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC
Getting Up, 1896
Color lithograph, 15 15/16 x 20 5/8" (404 x 523 mm) sheet
From *Elles* (Paris, 1896)
Purchased with the Lisa Norris Elkins Fund. 1950–129–10

pair of prostitutes, or that these are not prostitutes in a brothel at all, but kept women, in the privacy of their own plush apartments. However, only the costumed female clown and the nightspot where she worked can be identified with any certainty (fig. 48). She is Mademoiselle Cha-u-kao, who took her stage name from a noisy dance, the Chahut-Chaos, a crowd pleaser on the bill at the Moulin Rouge, the location of this print.

The *Seated Clown* is at once an example of the verve and wit of Lautrec's spontaneous drawing style as well as a vivid demonstration of his amazing skill as a color lithographer. While following the classic procedures of four-color printmaking (using red, yellow, blue, and black, printed in succession), he relegated blue to a minor role, and allowed overlapping red and yellow to form a range of tones from rouge red to canary yellow. Yellow does double duty here; it is used to suggest the sulphurous tinge of gaslight and also the tart shade of the scruffy collar worn by the clown. It is the black stone, however, that Lautrec used for the most startling effect. He must have been inspired by the matte-black shapes in early Japanese woodcuts (see fig. 9) for the black-stockinged

Fig. 47
HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC
Lacing Up a Corset (Entertaining a Customer), 1896
Color lithograph, 20 ½ x 15 ¾" (520 x 400 mm) sheet
From *Elles* (Paris, 1896)
Purchased with the Lisa Norris Elkins Fund. 1950–129–11

Fig. 48
HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC
Seated Clown (Mademoiselle Cha-u-kao), 1896
Color lithograph, 20 ½ x 15 13/16" (520 x 402 mm) sheet
From *Elles* (Paris, 1896)
Purchased with the Lisa Norris Elkins Fund. 1950–129–3

legs shown here, where the stark silhouette calls attention to a disconcertingly mannish pose. Amazingly, Lautrec kept the friendship of most of the subjects who submitted to his unforgiving candor, but he was always even-handed in his bluntness, whether his subject was a bedraggled performer or a cultivated patroness, and he never shied from turning his crayon on his own deformities.

POSTERS

Everything in [Chéret] is a joy: design, color, intentions, and result; he adds gaiety to our contemporary sadness, his fantasies puncture the monotonous gray of utilitarian [poster] alignments; Paris's old walls look rejuvenated and beribboned.

FÉLIX VALLOTTON in the *Gazette de Lausanne*, April 1891

WHEN JULES CHÉRET WON A gold medal at the Paris World's Fair in 1889 for his dashing posters, he had already been brightening the streets of Paris for more than three decades with colorful advertisements that used sprightly Parisiennes to tout the most popular entertainments around town. For years to come, the unmistakable rococo silhouettes of Chéret's winsome creatures set the look for young women in Paris, who came to be called Chérettes themselves. Chéret lorded over a field that had so far attracted few other artists of imagination until Bonnard presented a challenge with the stunning success of his first poster in 1891.

Bonnard's gift for bold graphic imagery was such that even when he confined his colors to monotone gray, tan, and black, he still got a message across. In the striking poster he designed for *La Revue blanche*, Bonnard used the elegant figure of his friend Misia Natanson to call attention to her husband's smart magazine (fig. 49). These were the years when Art Nouveau reigned supreme; young artists believed that the design of everything from napkins to doorknobs could stand improvement, and Bonnard showed no hesitation in lending his talents to such a banal commodity as the poster. His revolutionary designs initiated a period of poster mania lasting until the First World War and extending from St. Petersburg to Philadelphia, two among the many cities in Europe and the United States that hosted international poster exhibitions in the 1890s.

It was Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec who would turn out to be the most famous poster designer of all time, whose unforgettable images conjure up the heady atmosphere of Paris nightlife in the 1890s as no others can. Lautrec was a friend of many of the local stars, so perhaps it was not surprising that he outdid Bonnard for the job of designing a new poster for the Moulin Rouge in 1891, featuring a

Fig. 49
PIERRE BONNARD (French, 1867–1947)
Poster for *La Revue blanche*, 1894
Color lithograph, 29 11/16 x 23 3/16" (754 x 587 mm) image
The Louis E. Stern Collection. 1963–181–115

Fig. 50
HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC (French, 1864–1901)
Poster for *Moulin Rouge (La Goulue)*, 1891
Color lithograph, 66 1/8 x 46 1/4" (1680 x 1187 mm) sheet
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. R. Sturgis Ingersoll. 1940–45–1

dancer called "La Goulue" (The Greedy One), whose scandalous performances delighted audiences for years (fig. 50).

Lautrec had an intuitive feel for graphic design and knew how to prevent his posters from being overwhelmed by the other advertisements plastered around his. He evolved his own version of the traditional sign-maker's visual vocabulary of bright colors, simple shapes, and bold lettering. By setting off his inky silhouettes against fiery reds and brilliant yellows, he ensured that his posters would be easily picked out and clearly seen, especially on the streets after dark by gaslight. Lautrec's 1899 poster of the sinuous figure of Jane Avril was his last but one (fig. 52). Not long after this poster was printed (it was never released), Lautrec, increasingly disoriented by drink and disease, was sent to a sanatorium. He emerged from three months of confinement with his equilibrium somewhat recovered, but he never fully regained his vigor as an artist.

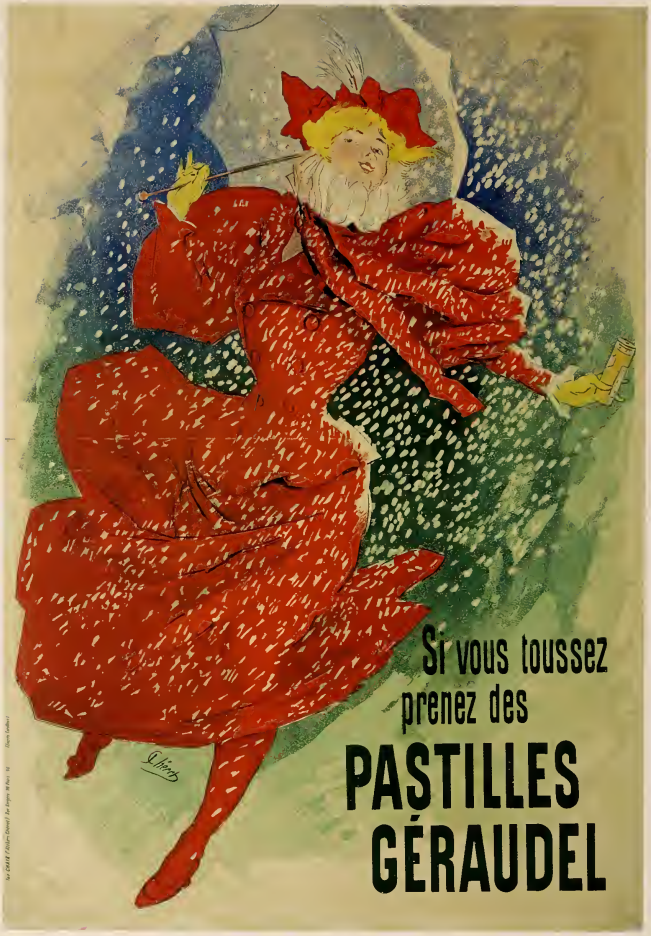


Fig. 51
JULES CHÉRET (French, 1836–1932)
Poster for *Géraudel Cough Drops*, 1896
Color lithograph, 23 ¾ x 15 ¼" (603 x 388 mm) sheet
Gift of William H. Helfand. 1989–69–5

Fig. 52
HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC
Poster for *Jane Avril*, 1899
Color lithograph, 21 13/16 x 14 13/16" (555 x 376 mm) sheet
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. R. Sturgis Ingersoll. 1940–45–29

JANE
Avril
H. Stern, Paris.
1899

GLOSSARY

Aquatint: A method of etching used to create broad passages of even tone. Typically, the plate is first dusted with powdered resin, which adheres to the surface when heated. The plate is immersed in an acid bath, which eats into the areas around the individual particles of resin, creating a fine-grained, textured surface that will hold ink.

Drypoint: A technique similar to engraving, in which a sharp, pointed tool called a drypoint is used to scratch fine lines directly on the surface of a metal plate.

Engraving: A process in which linear, V-shaped grooves are cut deeply into a metal plate using a tool known as a burin. The furrowed lines hold the ink to be printed.

Etching: Etching uses acid corrosion to "bite" designs into a metal plate. The plate is coated with a waxy, acid-resistant material, or ground. An etching needle is drawn through the ground, exposing lines of bare metal. The plate is immersed in an acid solution, which bites the lines into the plate only where the metal has been exposed by the needle.

Lithograph: Lithograph means, literally, "drawing on stone." A crayon or some other greasy material is used to make a drawing on a porous stone (or a grained metal plate). The stone is washed with a chemical solution that bonds the greasy drawing to the surface. Relying on the fact that grease repels water, the stone is kept damp while greasy printer's ink is applied, so that the ink adheres only to the drawn image.

Monotype: A method of printmaking that yields a single work of art. The image is created with ink (or some other wet medium) on a smooth surface, which is then printed on a sheet of paper.

Soft-ground: A method of etching using a nondrying, acid-resistant ground on the plate. As in etching, a drawing is made on the grounded plate, exposing the metal underneath. The printed lines of a soft-ground etching have a granular appearance, not unlike lines drawn with graphite or chalk.

Woodcut: The oldest and simplest method of printmaking, woodcut employs chisels, knives, and gouges to cut away areas from a plank of soft wood (with the grain). The raised portions left uncut are inked and printed.

Wood engraving: A method of woodcut invented in the late eighteenth century using engraving tools to cut a design on end-grain hardwood (against the grain). A fine-line method commonly used in the nineteenth century for book and newspaper illustrations.

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